



MD-433
Cecil County

- 1930s Working Farm owned by Zeitler Family
- 1941 Triumph Explosives Industries acquires farm from Zeitler Family. Uses farm for disposal of waste ordnance.
- 1948 Herron Family purchases property.
- 1970 Hazardous waste stored on farm by owner.
- 1990 Emergency Removal of Hazardous Waste from Elkton Farm.
- 2003 HSWMA completes a FUDS investigation of Elkton Farm Firehole. Recommends further action to document locations of and remove ordinance debris.

ELKTON FARM FIREHOLE
Elkton, Maryland

Site Location

The Elkton Farm Firehole site is located two miles northwest of Elkton, Maryland near the intersection of Routes 40 and 279 (Figure 1). The Firehole property occupies approximately 32-acres of the 400-acre Elkton Farm and is located just south of Zeitler Road between Little Elk Creek and Laurel Run. The most recent use of the site has been as a working farm. During the decade before and during World War II, the parcel had been the site of activity related to the manufacture of fireworks and munitions.

The Firehole parcel is located on the USGS Bayview/Newark West quadrangles at approximately 39°38' north latitude and 75°53' west longitude and has a Maryland grid coordinate of 655,000 N and 1,117,500 E. The roughly triangular 32-acre site is bounded on the west by Laurel Run, to the north by Zeitler Road, and to the East by Little Elk Creek (Figure 3). A gravel access road bisects the western quadrant of the site. The Firehole is in this western quadrant west of the gravel road. Land use surrounding the site is primarily agricultural/residential, with an area of medium to heavy industry property to the southeast across Little Elk Creek.

Site History

Throughout most of its history, Elkton Farm site has been used as a livestock farm with much of the surrounding fields under cultivation. During the early 1940s, Triumph Explosives Inc. acquired ownership of the Elkton Farm. During the period between the end of World War II and the 1970s, hazardous

material was stored and/or disposed of on the farm. Four hazardous waste disposal areas have been identified:

UNIT ONE

Unit One comprises two areas of the farm that were used by a property owner for the storage of hazardous waste, including drums of ash produced from the Thiokol area (Unit 3), ordnance debris from the TEI operation and drums of waste from Galaxy Chemical. In the early 1980s, the owner of the farm attempted to dispose of 53 drums of hazardous waste from Galaxy Chemical, a nearby solvent recycler, at Norris Farm Landfill in Baltimore County, Maryland. Norris Farm Landfill refused to accept the waste and Galaxy refused to take the waste back. Consequently, the owner of Elkton Farm stored the drums in the two farm buildings until he reported them to MDE almost ten years later. A Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) removal action was completed at Unit One in 1992, which resulted in the removal of drums containing flammable organic compounds, base neutral compounds, halogenated organic compounds, drums of solids, and 10 tons of contaminated soil.

UNIT TWO

Unit Two is the World War II era waste ordnance combustion pit known as the "Firehole," which was used by TEI during the 1940s. The Firehole was defined as the area for the disposal of waste explosives materials generated by the operations at TEI. TEI reportedly collected waste material from the manufacture of explosive ordnance and placed it in drums. This accumulated waste was kept wetted with alcohol or ether to prevent spontaneous combustion, and then carried to a shallow pit off Zeitler Road, spread thinly, and allowed to burn. Plant personnel monitored the burn until the waste explosive was consumed. Photographs in the TEI newsletter from the 1940s show the operation of the Firehole burn pit. Ordinance-related debris was observed on the ground surface during the sampling event.

UNIT THREE

Unit 3 is a 1-acre plot of land leased by the Thiokol Corporation for the operation of a rocket motor cleaning and recovery area in the late 1950s and early 1960. (Unit Three overlays a component of Unit Two.) The abandoned structures for this test area are located on the west side of the property. MDE currently has little information regarding the operation of this "rocket test area."

UNIT FOUR

Unit Four is an area on the farm reportedly used during this same era to dispose of waste organic solvents.

TEI purchased the Elkton Farm property in the early 1940s. The current owners, the Herron Family/MARVA Ltd. Partnership, acquired the property in 1948. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Thiokol Corporation leased a one-acre plot of the property. The farm property is currently leased to a commercial farming operation that rotates seasonal crops through the fields.

Current Status

This site is on the State Master List that identifies potential hazardous waste sites in Maryland. The Master List includes sites currently identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Information System. The information contained in the fact sheet presents a summary of past investigations and site conditions currently known to MDE.

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